

Pan :—"Wine is the poetry of life, in a manner of speaking, and ale you see is the prose,—very good to get along on, but no sorcery in it. Three things, I always say, a man needs have,—meat for his belly, a fire for his shins, and generous wine to keep him in countenance with himself. And that's no easy matter in a difficult world, I can tell you. 'Tis wine that gives a man courage and romance, and puts heart in him for deeds and adventures and all manner of plain wholesome love. And that, after all, is the mainspring with most men, hide it how they may. For what ever was done, that was worth doing, and was not done for a woman or for the sake of a friend, I should like to know."

As this comfortable philosophy of mine host strikes a note heard frequently in the varied music of Mr. Carman's later verse, I venture, before proceeding to mix my metaphors, to confuse the persons of poet and landlord. I fancy I can remember my introduction to the earliest vintages of his cellar. It was in a tavern of the north, and I dreamed over my cups. Beyond the firelight and the barred door a wind from the outlands, colder than death, ran with the white phantoms of the drift, and the fine dry sound of their journeying filled the background of my dream. Thus it was that I felt no surprise, nor doubted my condition, when a starry presence, taking form out of the hollow shadows of the room, stood at my elbow and refilled my glass. The wine shimmered with the cold radiance of the Northern Lights, and the eyes of the shadowy lady were winter stars. I drank, and at the very aroma of the wine I dreamed of her I loved—and it seemed to my heart that all the bitter denial of space lay between us.

I had tasted, indeed, a rare and magical vintage, poured for me, I believe, by the very *Musa Septentriones*. Since then I have tasted, from the same vineyard, wines full of golden light, warm with the summer and the south, and with no less of enchantment in the bouquet. These I have sipped while June spilled her roses at my door, and turning to my love, have seen reflected in her eyes the beauty of life, and the wonder of it. But enough of allegory. Let my pen return to its accustomed uses!

* * * * *

I remember being compelled to listen to a discussion of Mr. Carman's work in a Fleet

Street office. A good deal of the talk was piffle, and failed to seriously distract my attention from the contemplation and enjoyment of a long fat Notara. Among the clash of phrases, and varied opinions as to the value of hedonism and mysticism in modern philosophy, my mind unconsciously noted for future consideration a question advanced by a smooth-faced, chubby youth :—"I say, you fellows, why is it that we can't trot to the front in this country a poet as individual, and as intensely lyrical as Carman? Something to do with that old gag about poetry belonging to the childhood of a race, I suppose?"

* * * * *

It strikes me as I write that if my Fleet Street friend had said *sustainedly* instead of *intensely* he would have put a fairly accurate name to one of the most distinctive characteristics of Mr. Carman's verse. I can recall no other poet in whose work the purely lyrical note is so constant and so sustained. In "*Pipes of Pan*," for instance, the initial poem which runs to some five hundred and fifty lines, is essentially a lyric. It has a potency of charm which seems to me to justify its length, in the face of Poe's famous dictum. His ballads, again, are lyrical to a degree that almost disguises the form.

* * * * *

Somebody has said that poetry, like religion, must be experienced before we know what it is; that definitions help us not at all to an understanding of it. Nevertheless, behind the symbolism of a religion we may look for some definite ethical ideas, and even behind the varied moods of a poet we may venture to look for some dominant note, some special message to the age. Through Mr. Carman's verse, it seems to me, we feel the glad old Greek spirit of beauty-worship touched with an eerie glamour native to the north. He would reconcile the clean earth-born joys of the body and the fine moods of the spirit. He would emphasize our kinship with all the glad life that moves on the sunlit earth and in the breathing deeps of the sea, yet would not deny us the "dear and deathless dream."